# PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

LAWRENCE DURRELL
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TERENCE TILLER

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## Ideas About Poems.

*The schizophrene, the cyclothyme,*
*Pass from the droll to the sublime.*
*Coming of epileptoid stock*
*They tell the time without a clock.*

Nonsense is never just nonsense; it is more like good sense with all the logic removed. At its highest point poetry makes use of nonsense in order to indicate a level of experience beyond the causality principle. You don't quicken or laugh at nonsense because it is complete non-sense; but because you detect its resemblance to sense.

Logic, syntax, is a causal instrument, inadequate for the task of describing the whole of reality. Poems don't describe, but they are sounding-boards which enable the alert consciousness to pick up the reverberations of the extra-causal reality for itself.

Poems are negatives; hold them up to a clean surface of daylight and you get an apprehension of grace. The words carry in them complete submerged poems; as you read your memory goes down like the loud pedal of a piano, and all tribal, personal, associations begin to reverberate. Poems are blueprints. They are not buildings but they enable you to build for yourself. Serious nonsense and funny nonsense are of the same order: both overreach causality and open a dimension independant of logic but quite real. Shakespear and Lear are twins who do not dress alike. Serious nonsense and comical nonsense have a common origin, and an uncommon expression

*Nothing is lost, sweet self*
*Nothing is ever lost.*
*The spoken word*
*Is not exhausted but can be heard.*
*Music that stains the silence remains.*
*O! echo is everywhere the unbeckonable bird!*

L. D.

## Poems for one Person.

### I

The silence that I break was more profound.
and purer, sound
—as being absent is a kind
of closer bridal, in the mind.
Nor do my words create
the peace they imitate.

Again I break with them the gentle thought
silence had brought,
painting that inward armistice
with child's, but unperspective, eyes;
in the real kiss knew yet
unions more close than it.

No threatenings then of temporal campaign
shall steal again
our spoken silence and our speech
that needs no silence each to each:
nor space nor presence mar
the better thing we are.

### II

Grief is not you, nor are
the form and inward form
of you the thin despair
that whispers of your harm.

Still there are ways that leave
no valiance at all.
not of the mind but of
the inward animal :

that which is lustful in
the selves' enchanted bond,
or sees a robber when
hand is on trusting hand;
that which is death when else
I am a fire of peace,
pours tides across my pulse,
negations in my face;

the primitive revolt
against a mind or will,
the blood of Abel spilt
in cups already full.
Being and feeling and thought
are but a naked man
who fights what he is not,
the animal within :

whose fields we are; their path
the peace of me-and-you;
their long discourteous wrath
the civil war of woe.
Knowledge and now conflict;
nor have I power enough
only to live your fact
and the name of grief.

III

The lines that mathematics draw
(angular circumscription of
the curved impatience of a paw,
the eccentric swell of love)
define but cannot rule at all
the leaping inward animal.

The leaping inward animal
(the satyr in his lonely wood,
the lamb in his Wordsworthian dale)
makes every leap a maidenhead;
nor can the printed place foresee
where next those lusty feet may lie.

Where next those lusty feet may lie
(in pitfalls for the grinning wolf,
or by the writhing iron sea)
is a great sickness in itself,
whose large enfevered motions flaw
the lines that mathematics draw.

Terence Tiller.

## Brevity.

My love in her attire doth show her wit.
For brevity's the very soul of it.

Terence Tiller.

## Coptic Church, Musturrud.

How far beyond the homes of sense
rears up this primitive pretence
of a transcendent flesh (whose birth
was from the centric monolith)
We bow the lintel of our head
to written lintels of the dead,
pictorial inmates of a room
cut in the frozen curl of time :
respecting older than belief
the greater ignorance of life.
Nor any faith beyond the brain
is more than a dark love of man.

So built within this frame of Christ
are stones of a remoter past ;
the blazoned myth of Horus lies
within these faded images
where glowed Mithraic pigment in
the Thracian monks' symbolic line ;
the spirit of this place is all
the dust of worship in the wall.
the worship of ourselves in God.
the blood's dark instinct from the dead.
whose memory of magnificence
reared up this primitive pretence.

Terence Tiller

## Anatolia.

*Editor's Note :—*

This poem is one of the most important of recent productions in modern Greek; begun some years ago in Greece it was carried into exile by the authoress and finished in the appropriate refugee atmosphere of the *Luna Park Hotel* in Cairo. It was first issued privately in Cairo at the end of 1940.

Its theme is that of the Asia Minor disaster; its form dramatic—borrowed from the traditional shadow-play; its treatment, curiously enough for a heroic theme, is unheroic but eloquent, steady, poignant, very Greek. The following recitative from *Anatolia* is in literal English translation by the authoress herself, and is reproduced by permission.

## Recitative from Anatolia.

Now in August I evoke,
I evoke those Christian names
Which have propped up the shores of Anatolia
Beginning with the three harbourless harbours of Pontus,
Samsûnda, Trapezûnda, Kerasûnda,
And like two ancient leaden seals suspended,
Crômne and Sânda,
Upon the brows of the untravelled mountains
Where a forgotten Greek was still in use,
Where « ouk » they said for « no » and for the ox « bous »:

Afterwards, islands of Polis and Polis herself,
The much dreamed-upon tumult:
Kêos and Moundaniâ, havens for Brôusa,

Mârmara with its migrations of fishes,
Aivalî and the breeched men of Aivalî,
These of the seaboard first among smugglers
Those of the land for the pruning of olives,
And all their psalters lettered men;
And then the famous wharves of Smyrna,
A place for all the stacked merchandise,
Or dawdling down the glass-penned coffee-shops.

Now for its terrors,
Vourlâ, Tsesmês, Alâtsata and small villages
Praised by none save their own villagers;
Sôukia, Koussândasi, where the honey
Drips from the branches in the gardens of figs,
And where the plane is black with innumerable herds,
Horses and oxen and sheep with broad- tails;
And often the Samiots pounced on them and robbed,
Coming in their caiëques from the near island.

Jackals pass swimming here
When the muscatel grapes ripen
And you can hear the crowing of cocks
In the long dead calms upon the waters.
Here Kamilla, the supernatural mountain
Hurls down the squalls like boulders
Through her ravines; after all these
Faraway Makrî and Adâlia
Inside its towering walls, Mersîna
Where Arabia begins
Where the white turbans begin to multiply
And Christendom dwindles.

Now other deep names :
Nîgdhi, Sevâstia, Kastamonî, Kaesâria
From the time of the saints and bishops
Recorded for us in the Great Calendar
And before the war closed all the roads
The villagers came down on the eve of Saint Basil
And uttered the carols ;
They also at the approach of winter
Would travel about to comb and clean
The mattress-cotton, tamboura on the shoulders.

From there the camels carried down
All import and export, coffee, sugar,
Flowered stuffs, tobacco and poppy-seed.
At night the doorways of caravanserais
Were blocked with bales
And daylong rang their bells,
Seeking a bride after the Turkish proverb.
The treble bell sang : *Evlèndirralim*
The tenor bell sang : *Nairrthènboolalòom*
And the bass bell sang : *Soordàhn boordàhn boolalòom*

Here the very sand bore fruit. Harvests
Without seed, cockles and mussels,
And all the riches of the Christian serfs
Were gardens submarine,
A longing swayed them endlessly like water
Blurring them, for Greece
Which ached in them like their own homeland.

From then when Constantinople fell,
They continued to sing the old songs,
And their gait was leisurely
Until the war of 1914
When the German taught the Turk
How to wipe out the rayahs cheaply:
So at first they uprooted the weak members,
Old men and women with children,
And they sent them walking into exile
To the confines of Turkey where you will not
Find a hand familiar with the sign of the Cross;
On their shoulders they wore sheepskins,
On their feet felts—
Who of them lived to see those unheard-of highlands?
Snow covered them in the passes,
The dawn-winds turned them to marble:
Thousands of unburied bodies
With their winding-sheets and Sunday clothes
Still folded in their luggage against burial.
Their nakedness haunted the ditches,
Little heads, washed and combed each morning
With Easter joy, now on the roots of trees
Laid down by their mothers in exhaustion
Worn out, and perhaps still hoping
A female beast might come to suckle them.

And they gathered the men in gangs
Of serfs to break the pitiless stones;
Their flesh from beatings fell in ribbons,
In ribbons also from the cold.
They lay down and died in herds.

*Aiee! Roads of Anatolia,*
*That lead to Armenia,*
*That lead to Arabia!*
Somewhere there are highways planted with poplars.
In other places with laurel, with mulberry-trees
To refresh the traveller in summer
At every breath with the coolness of the leaf:
But your roads all their long length are planted
With upright martyrs' bones.
What remains for the traveller's refreshment?

So were the villages and communities undone.
Sinking door by door
Until during the fourth winter
Everywhere the wrath began to abate
Though the fate of Anatolia still weighed in the scales:
The villages all asleep in their poplars;
And from the straits of Chios, slowly, slowly,
And one by one on the Eve of May Day
Ships crept out.

Elie Papadimitriou.

## St. James' Street 1939.

A cold board, their battlefield,
Presents a gashed Scotch salmon,
Grouse and the flesh of mammals;
Whiskered waiters tread delicate as satyrs,
Retrieve on plates the noble dead;
The ageing broker thinks of Perigord.
Wings of the Ortolan are furled
In dark and quivering tombs,
Finger and thumb appraise
Ripeness of autumn fruit.
If through the opened windows
Diner and sleeper chance to hear
Whisper of trumpet, tread of troops.
Above the *Times* and Stilton stir -
Exemplars of the Freudian theme -
The beaks of old men scenting blood.

Robin Fedden.

## Written in the third year of the War.

The men that went out of Athens on the bright day in spring
When everyone had a flower or a flag, and the Greeks were carrying the beard-
Like classic heroes, aloft on their shoulders. [ed sailors,
The men that went out that day waved from the lorries,
And when we cried 'Good Luck!' called back to us 'We're off to Berlin'
Those that began returning a week later had nothing to say.
The clouds hung low, bagged with wet, and the wind stripped petals from the
[trees.
They stared with blank eyes over the lorry sides, the bandages muddy on their
We watched with compassion and bewilderment. [heads.
It seemed a long way to bring the wounded. We were not told how close the
[Germans followed.
When the lorries stopped and the men slid down like old men, blind, without
[response for us,
We felt then a thing unknown to our generation, the sorrow and terror of
[defeat.

As we lay in the harbour amidst sunken ships,
Our decks crowded, the guns uptilted on the quayside,
The creeping sun for the last time lit for us
The Acropolis and its tokens of ancient wars.
Others were driven out before this; we had held ourselves an unbiddable
[people.
When the brilliance of the Pelopponese went down in darkness, when the night
[came between us.
Our friends returned to Athens, excited a little, more afraid. We faced
[the sea
Knowing until the day of our return, we would be exiles from a country not our
[own.

We, the denyers, have known long denial.
Alien in a domesticated land, choiceless between the century-planted and the
|sand.
We are a long way from childhood, from the wild shore and the mountain
|wind.
He who shared memory, he who awaited and recalled us, has died before we
|could return to him.
The future may lead elsewhere now. It will not matter.
Have we not learnt enough?
Separation become for ever has brought us low, and victory will have an
|emptiness.
There's not much spared us. Born into war and ignorant of peace, our arro-
|gance
Grew from longing. In the end we may know a thing withheld us from our
|birth.

Olivia Manning.

## Base Town.

Winter's white guard continual on the hills;
The wind savaging from the stony valleys
And the unseen front. And always the soldiers going,
Soldiers and lorries beating the streets of cobble,
Like blood to where a wound is flowing.

War took friends, lights and names away. Clapped down
Shutters on windows' welcome. Brought those letters
Which wished to say so much they dared not say.
The proud and feminine ships in the harbour roads
Turned to a North-East grey.

Curious the intimacy we felt with Them;
We moved our meals to fit Their raids; we read
Their very hand across each bomb-slashed wall.
Their charred plane fallen in the cratered square
Held twisted in it all

Their work, Their hate, Their failure. Prisoners
Bearded and filthy, had bones, eyes and hair
Like other men in need. But dead like snow,
Cold like those racing winds or sirens' grief,
Was the hate which struck no blow :

The fear of speaking was a kind of tic
Pulling at the eyes. If stranger drank with stranger
It seemed thief drank with thief. Was it only every

Night, the fall of the early and lampless dark?
I remember it so often. And the lie,
The twist of reason,
The clever rumour planted in the nerves.
The dossier infecting like a coccus;
All these became for us the town, the season.

These, and the knowledge that to die,
Some stony miles north of our wintering,
Was a more ordinary thing.

Bernard Spencer.

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